

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPF #0142/01 0570938
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 260938Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1733

UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 000142

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/ES, R, F, EAP/MLS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)

SUBJECT: COMMEMORATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF U.S. - CAMBODIA
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

¶1. SUMMARY: July 2010 marks the 60th Anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cambodia, and the Embassy plans to mark this event with a week of commemorative activities designed to highlight the development of bilateral relations during that period and our commitment to Cambodia for the future. Embassy seeks Department support and consideration of high-level visits to make the commemoration a success; see action request in paragraph 7.
END SUMMARY

¶2. Embassy Phnom Penh has planned an ambitious series of programs designed to highlight our contributions to the development of Cambodia over the past sixty years. A week of events beginning July 18 is expected to include the signing of bilateral agreements in the health, education, food security and trade sectors, concerts by the MARFORPAC Marine Band and the rock band Dengue Fever (led by a Cambodian vocalist), and an academic symposium with participation of distinguished scholars from government and academia, including former U.S. Ambassadors to Cambodia. A gala dinner is also planned as well as a series of cultural events which highlight the contribution of Cambodian-Americans to the arts, including a film festival, art exhibit and dance recital produced by a Cambodian-American choreographer. A joint 60th Anniversary commission has approved a logo which will be used to brand the celebration. The Royal Government of Cambodia also plans to issue a special postage stamp to commemorate it.

¶3. This series of commemorative events will provide the United States with an ideal opportunity to reinforce the Secretary's message of U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia and our commitment to the responsible development of Cambodia. The timing is particularly fortuitous in that the commemoration will happen during the same time frame as two major events that reflect our broadening military relationship: the visit by the hospital ship USS Mercy to provide treatment to many thousands of rural Cambodians through its medical humanitarian mission (June 15-28); and the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative (GPOI) Capstone exercise, a large multinational military exercise involving several thousand troops from both countries as well as participants from 22 other nations (July 9-30).

¶4. Especially considering the tragedy of Cambodian history, these 60th Anniversary events will help cement our long term commitment to Cambodia and highlight the concrete benefits of that commitment and cooperation. Much of the public diplomacy planned for the anniversary will focus on the historical investment the U.S. made in the country's infrastructure and human capital since the early 1950s. Several of the events are slated to take place in buildings that were originally constructed with U.S. assistance during that period -- a meaningful way to emphasize to the younger generation that our presence in and commitment to Cambodia is not a fleeting phenomenon.

¶5. Opinion polls repeatedly reflect the overwhelmingly positive opinion of Cambodians towards the United States; roughly 85% of the population has a positive view of the U.S. and its ideals. The planned commemorative events will show that we do not take this reaction for granted and that our commitment to Cambodia is not eclipsed by the growing influence of China, whose recent 50th

anniversary celebration launched a series of high level visitors from Beijing. Our planning is designed to enhance all sectors of our cooperation with Cambodia and to target all elements of Cambodian society in the process. As such we believe it will lay the groundwork for strong future cooperation.

¶16. Foreign Minister Hor Namhong and the Ambassador are personally engaged in the planning front, and have formed a joint commission of selected Embassy staff and representatives from several Cambodian ministries. Last fall, Hor Namhong invited the Secretary to visit Cambodia to commemorate the anniversary, and we would of course welcome the Secretary's participation -- and that of other senior administration officials as well -- during this time frame. A substantive schedule for such a visit could include the signing of several bilateral agreements, a gala dinner possibly hosted at the Royal Palace (with the attendant historical context of the well-known 1967 visit of Jacqueline Kennedy hosted by then Prince Sihanouk), a speech to the youth of Cambodia focusing on the future, and a key role in whichever of the other ongoing commemorative events are appropriate. The undeniable message to the world would be a clear commitment of the United States to the region, and every aspect of the 60th Anniversary events that would form the backdrop of the visit would underscore that message with visual acuity.

¶17. As existing post public diplomacy funds are not sufficient for the estimated \$130,000 budget required for this commemoration, post seeks Department funding to support the initiative. We will of course approach U.S. companies in the private sector for assistance, but do not expect a significant response from the limited pool of businesses active in Cambodia. For its part, the Royal Government of Cambodia has offered in-kind contributions to support the celebration including prominent venues for many of the events, and it remains actively involved in coordinating the required

permissions and venues to make it happen. Post seeks an early indication of Department's support in order to proceed with the planning and commitments necessary to make this event a reality.

RODLEY